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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - VENEZUELA'S UNSC CANDIDACY

September 23-25 dailies ran considerable commentary by columnists on Venezuela's bid for a seat in the United Nations Security Council. Following are excerpts:

11. On September 24, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio", (circ. 260,108) Maria de los Angeles Fernandez, of think tank Fundacion Chile 21, outlines the advantages of voting for Venezuela in the UNSC in a column entitled, "Venezuela and the UN: The Day After." Quote:

"Wouldn't it be more convenient to use soft power...and integrate Venezuela into the UN, forcing it to make a commitment...in the organization's effort to promote peace and international security? Plus, integrating those with positions such as Venezuela's would contribute to give the United Nations greater legitimacy and remove the suspicion that the Security Council is chained to the United States."

12. On September 24, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio", (circ. 260,108) columnist Carlos Pea, "Chavez' Defense." Quote:

"With his manners that seem to mock standards...Chavez is the typical nationalist and populist leader with hands full of money that little by little builds an ambitious platform of influence in the region. But Chavez is not outdated...or exotic. Don't all countries use their money to influence when they have the chance? .... We must stop seeing Chavez as an exotic clown, because he is not. He is a populist, nationalist leader, of those the world has seen many times.... We must also cease to find revolting the idea of voting for Venezuela in the UNSC. After all, the arena of international politics is one place where principles...are not the rule.... And if we look at the consequences, voting for Venezuela is not bad. It is a way of restraining Bush's foreign policy, which truly lacks manners and rules and knows about kicking around when it comes to defending its interests. Next to this...Chavez is not exotic, he is an example of the French Illustration."

13. On September 23, conservative, independent "La Tercera," (circ. 195,626) column by former House Chairman Jorge Schaulsohn (PPD) entitled, "Stepping into Traps." Quote:

"I'm always awed by the naivet of some politicians who fall into traps.... Chavez, unlike our politicians, ...knows that being a member of the UNSC amounts to nothing. His interest is not winning the election, but in running. His goal is to use the bid as a platform to give his Bolivarian revolution ideological content and international legitimacy...and provide a mechanism for countries such as China or Russia to fix old scores with the United States, for they see the vote for Venezuela as a way to show their independence."

14. On September 24, conservative, independent "La Tercera," (circ. 222,084) Alvaro Vargas Llosa column entitled, "Neither Venezuela nor

Guatemala." Quote:

"Estimates are that neither of the two countries running have the two thirds needed to win the seat in the Security Council. Therefore, Washington's strategy is not to impose Guatemala, but to block Chavez' victory and wait for a third candidate to emerge."

15. On September 25, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio," (circ. 129,000) Andres Oppenhimer column entitled, "If Chavez Wins, United Nations Loses." Quote:

"If Venezuela wins the seat, the greatest loser would not be the United States, but United Nations.... As a high-ranking Latin American official told me, with a stray bullet as Chavez focusing all the attention in the Security Council, 'large nations would be more than tempted to pick up their bags and leave.' Bush has already done the United Nations a lot of damage with his unilateral diplomacy and Chavez' victory could mean closing the coffin."

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